

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LUSAKA 03460 271555Z
ACTION AF-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 3460

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, ZA, AO
SUBJ: ANGOLAN REFUGEES IN ZAMBIA

REF: (A) LUSAKA 3228 (NOTAL); (B) LUSAKA 3459

SUMMARY: GRZ HOME MINISTER MILNER'S REFERENCE TO 800 ANGOLAN REFUGEES ARRIVING IN ZAMBIA LAST WEEK (REFTEL B) IS MISLEADING. THE 800 ANGOLAN REFUGEES HE REFERRED TO REPRESENT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ANGOLAN REFUGEES WHICH HAVE ARRIVED IN ZAMBIA SINCE NOVEMBER (REFTEL A). MILNER'S ESTIMATE OF 16,000 ANGOLAN REFUGEES IN ZAMBIA APPARENTLY INCLUDES THE APPROXIMATELY 12-13,000 COVERED IN THE UNHCR PROGRAM PLUS 3,000 OTHERS SCATTERED IN THE WESTERN AND NORTHWESTERN PROVINCES WHO ARE ON THEIR OWN. REPRESENTATIVE BELIEVES THAT THIS LATTER GROUP CONTAINS MORE THAN 3,000 ANGOLAN REFUGEES AND THAT THEY ARE LARGELY LEFT TO SHIFT FOR THEMSELVES. END SUMMARY

1. IN A DISCUSSION DECEMBER 27 WITH UNHCR REP. OPDAHL AND VISITING IRC REP. WIESNER EMBASSY LEARNED THAT THE GRZ IS IN THE PROCESS OF SHIFTING THE APPROX. 800 ANGOLAN REFUGEES FROM
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PAGE 02 LUSAKA 03460 271555Z

IMUSHO (REFTEL A) TO THE PERMANENT CAMP AT MEHEBA IN THE NORTHWESTERN PROVINCE. OPDAHL TALKED WITH SOME OF THE REFUGEES THAT ARRIVED IN LUSAKA ON DECEMBER 24 AND TERMED THEIR CONDITION SATISFACTORY. HE SAID THAT THESE 800 REFUGEES COULD BE ACCOMODATED AT MEHEBA READILY ON AVAILABLE CLEARED LAND WITH ROAD ACCESS. THE ADDITIONAL 800 ANGOLAN REFUGEES PRESENT NO SIGNIFICANT

FINANCIAL PROBLEM TO THE UNHCR.

2. OPDAHL DESCRIBED THE GROUP OF REFUGEES AS NON-OVAMBO, UNITA ACTIVITISTS ORIGINATING IN THE LOBITO-BENGUELA COASTAL AREA, WHO HAD MADE THEIR WAY ACROSS ANGOLA AND WERE LAST LOCATED IN THE BORDER TOWN OF CUNGAR LAST OCTOBER BEFORE THEY LEFT FOR ZAMBIA. HE BELIEVES THAT THE GROUP CONTAINS AN UNUSUALLY LARGE PORTION OF YOUNG, SINGLE, FIT MALES WHO CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THEIR UNITA SYMPATHIES. HE SAID ONE REFUGEE HE HAD SEEN HAD LOST HIS LEG IN FIGHTING BEFORE ARRIVING IN ZAMBIA AND THAT SWAPO IS ALSO SATISFIED NONE OF THEIR ORGANIZATION ARE WITH THIS GROUP OF REFUGEES.

3. THE UNHCR REP EXPRESSED MODEST SURPRISE THAT HOME MINISTER MILNER HAD USED THE FIGURE OF 16,000 AS THE NUMBER OF ANGOLAN REFUGEES IN ZAMBIA. RECENTLY THE GRZ HAS NOT PUBLICLY STATED AN ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF ANGOLAN REFUGEES IN ZAMBIA. OPDAHL, WHEN ASKED IF 3,000 REFUGEES REPRESENTED A REASONABLE ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF ANGOLAN REFUGEES PRESENT IN ZAMBIA NOT SERVICED BY THE UNHCR PROGRAM, REPLIED THAT WHILE HE DID HAVE AN EXACT FIGURE OF SUCH PERSONS HE THOUGHT THAT THERE WERE MORE THAN 3,000 ANGOLANS IN ZAMBIA SHIFTING FOR THEMSELVES. OPDAHL PLANS SHORTLY TO EXPLORE THIS TOPIC WITH THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS ON THE BASIS OF THE MINISTER'S STATEMENT IN ORDER TO REFINE THE ESTIMATE OF THE TOTAL OF NUMBER OF ANGOLANS IN ZAMBIA WHOM THE UNHCR PROGRAM MIGHT ASSIST EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOT IN THE ORGANIZED PERMANENT CAMP. LOW

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